

## Measuring Outcomes at The Learning Partnership

The Learning Partnership regularly monitors and reports on the funding we receive, how many staff and volunteers we have, and what they do in our programs and initiatives. We know how many workshops brochures, or events we deliver. In other words, we document and report on program **inputs, activities, and outputs**.

### What is Outcome Measurement?

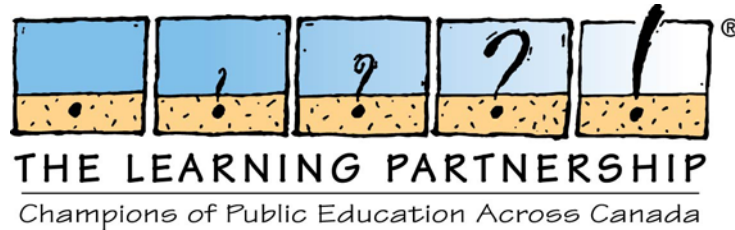
It is an approach to planning and managing projects that encourages us to be clear both about what our projects are **DOING** and what they are **CHANGING**

### Why undertake outcome measurement?

In growing numbers, educators, governments, other funders, and the public are calling for clearer evidence that the resources they expend actually produce benefits for people. They want to know that programs to which they devote their time really make a difference. That is, they want better accountability for the use of resources.

One clear and compelling answer to the question of "Why measure outcomes?" is: To see if our programs really make a difference in the education of children and in the quality of education across Canada. Do our programs and initiatives help move our vision forward?

Outcome measurement is not just a way to strengthen accountability for the use of resources. Used effectively, it can help TLP make wise planning and management decisions.



## What are the criteria for Good Performance Measures?

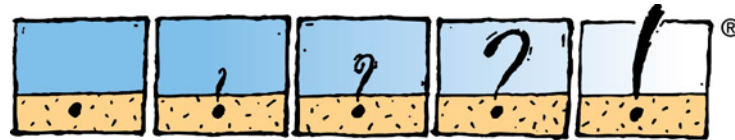
Although it is not necessary to have all these elements, good performance measures include criteria such as:

- Meaningful.
- Responsibility-linked.
- Organizationally acceptable.
- Customer focused.
- Balanced.
- Timely
- Credible.
- Cost effective.
- Compatible.
- Comparable.
- Simple.

## Statistical Design:

Throughout your program design, you need to keep in mind the following key statistical components:

1. **Statistical significance:** this is a terms that tells how sure you are that a difference or relationship exists. This usually involves data calculations using statistical means tests, and is it important to consult a statistician before making a claim of statistical variance.
2. **Control groups:** In order to effectively measure whether your program has made a difference, it can be useful to review outputs and outcomes for groups of individuals who have NOT participated in your program, to ensure that your program did make a difference. For example, Little Brothers and Little Sisters were 46 percent less likely than controls to initiate drug use during the study period.
3. **Randomized cohort:** often you can get skewed results if only those people who are keen to participate are measured. If possible, the more randomization that can be put into measurement the better.



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### **Three key elements of the TLP Outcome Measurement Framework:**

This tool will help you design your program or initiative against meeting the goals and our vision. It will assist you in:

#### **Communicating Intent**

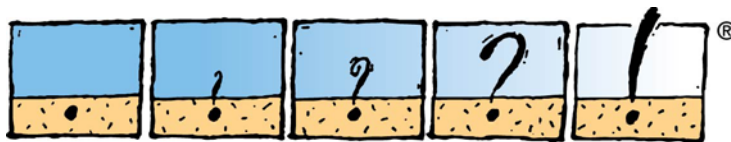
Plan or clarify your project internally, as well as explain your project idea to potential sponsors.

#### **Monitoring and Evaluating**

A method to collect data (indicators) on outputs, outcomes, impact should be devised.

#### **Modifying Your Program/Initiative**

Monitoring/evaluation provides insight to help you determine necessary changes to link activities to impact.



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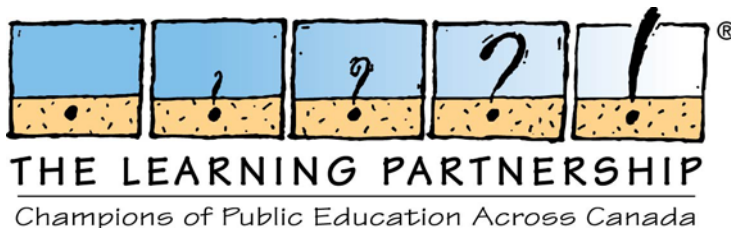
## How to Complete the Outcome Measurement Framework

### Step 1: Complete *Impact* Columns

#### **What impact will your program make towards achieving longer term change?**

Impact describes your vision of a preferred future and underlines why the project is important. Your project alone cannot make this change, but it should contribute to bringing it about. Impact should be observable beyond the lifetime of your project.

When considering an impact statement, it is best to keep it simple, and grow it later. You need to be able to realistically acquire data to measure against your impact statement. For example, Big Brothers, Big Sisters (BBBS) had the following impact statement -- mentoring programs can positively affect young people. BBBS measures the impact against statements such as: Young people involved with BBBS are less likely to start using drugs and alcohol; less likely to hit someone; have improved school attendance and performance, and attitudes toward completing schoolwork; and improved peer and family relationships.



## How to Complete the Outcome Measurement Framework (cont'd)

### Step 2: Complete *Inputs* column

#### What resources you use to create the results you seek?

Inputs are the resources that you use to carry out your activities. Your list will likely include categories such as

**Staffing:** What skill sets? How many fulltime equivalents (FTE's), how many volunteer hours?

**Office or meeting space:** Size? Location?

**Equipment:** Computers? Chairs? etc.

**Materials:** Stationery? Training text books? Bus tickets?

If there are other types of resources that you use, please include them in this column

### Step 3: Complete *Activities* column

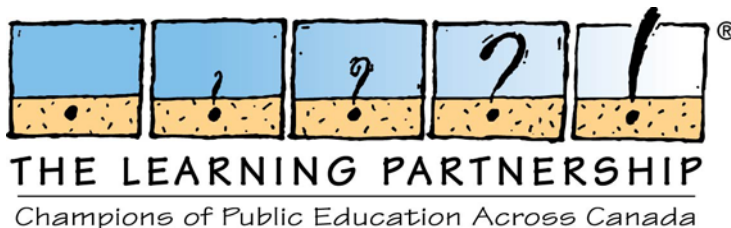
#### What do you do to create the change you seek?

Activities are what you do with the resources that you have. Activities include the strategies, techniques, and types of treatment that comprise the program's service methodology. For instance, training and counseling at-risk youth to help them complete their high school credits are activities. The challenge is to group your list of Activities into between five and eight 'sets' or 'clusters'. If you have too many Activities listed, it's very difficult to keep track of your progress.

### Step 4: Complete *Outputs* column

#### How do you create the potential for desired results?

Outputs are the most immediate results of your project. Each Output relates directly to one of your Activities so you should have as many Outputs as Activities. Outputs usually coincide with the completion of the Activity.



#### **Step 4: Complete *Outputs* column (cont'd)**

If given enough resources, we can control output levels. In a WTK workshop session, for example, the number of workshops held and the number of children served are outputs. With enough staff and supplies, the program could double its output of workshops and participants.

It is more difficult, however, to track what happens to participants after they receive our services. It is difficult to report, for example, that a certain percent of our participants at the leadership courses used different approaches to strategic management after our program conducted sessions on that skill. In other words, it is more difficult to obtain information on our program's outcomes.

*Tip:* Use active language to help the reader visualize the kind of change that the project is trying to foster. Focus either on the product of the activity or the expected changes in the participants. Use the present tense. (e.g. Students share life experiences with each other, learn new skills and take on daily tasks with more confidence.)

#### **Step 5: Complete *Outcomes* column**

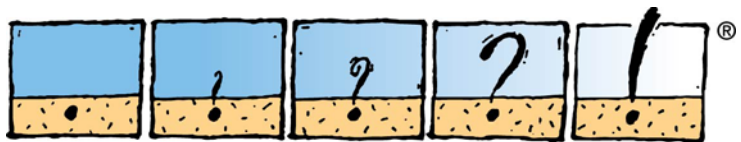
##### **How do you achieve desirable changes to people, organizations and communities?**

Outcomes are more than one step removed from Activities, are fewer in number and flow from a combination of several immediate Outputs. Outcomes should be observable at or shortly after the end of the project.

Outcomes may relate to behavior, skills, knowledge, attitudes, values, condition, or other attributes. They are what participants know, think, or can do; or how they behave; or what their condition is, that is different following the program.

*Tip:* “Goals” and “Objectives” are slippery terms; their meanings vary with each person using them. Often, they can be linked to Outcomes language; Outcomes relate to “Objectives” and Impact to “Goals” (and sometimes “Vision Statement”).





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**Program/Initiative:**

**Time Frame:**

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**IMPACT**

**INPUTS**

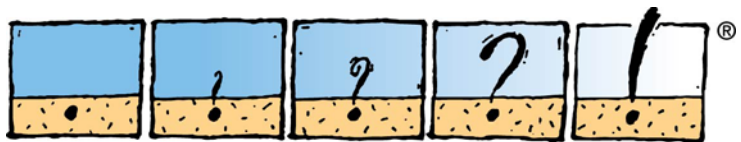
**ACTIVITIES**

**OUTPUTS**

**OUTCOMES**

**IMPACT**

IMPACT	INPUTS	ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES	IMPACT



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### OUTCOME MEASUREMENT FRAMEWORK

Program/Initiative:

Time Frame:

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**IMPACT**

**INPUTS**

**ACTIVITIES**

**OUTPUTS**

**OUTCOMES**

**IMPACT**

IMPACT	INPUTS	ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES	IMPACT